



At 6 am on Sunday, May 12, I was notified by Mr. Schmidt that someone had created an account on Instagram which was impersonating him. He sent me screen shots of the posts that had been made on the account, and among them were photos of Mr. Schmidt and his family, another teacher in our district, Mrs. Howson, and one of our coaches and substitute teachers, Mr. Anderson. Several of the posts were highly inappropriate as they were graphic and sexual in nature, and some of the other posts were threats against staff members. This was immediately reported to Instagram as a violation of their user policies, and I told Mr. Schmidt that I would begin an investigation into the posts first thing Monday morning.

Monday morning, I contacted the police department due to the threats that were posted on line targeting a staff member. While the police were working with Instagram to identify IP addresses for the account and the posts to it, I began investigating and questioning students in my office about what they knew regarding the account or posts on it. Several students were following the account or had posted comments on it, so I received information from various students about what they knew.

As the day went on, I continued to interview students and I learned not only who had created the account, but who had made the posts to it. I received a call from the police near the end of the day and they confirmed that they had possession of all the IP addresses from Instagram. They were beginning to write search warrants for all the homes of the students that I learned were involved, but said we could avoid seizing property from each of these homes if I could get students to admit to their posts and share exactly what their involvement was so we would cause much less stress on our families. I agreed to continue to speak with the students to try this approach. I had not spoken to H[REDACTED] at that time, so I called his father and briefly explained the nature of the situation and asked if he could come to the school to meet with me and H[REDACTED]. He arrived within an hour, and I called H[REDACTED] down to question him.

H[REDACTED] was initially uncooperative and denied knowing anything about the posts other than what he had heard students talking about in school. I explained to him the severity of what was happening and that the police were involved, and that his story was different than what I had already learned about his involvement. At that point, he did begin to share more details and admitted that he knew about it, but placed the blame on others who he said had created the account and posted to it. I then explained that police would be bringing a search warrant to his home and seizing all electronic devices to verify what he actually posted. He then admitted to creating the fake Instagram account in Mr. Schmidt's name and that he had posted one thing on the account which was a photo of a gas pump nozzle and comment. He denied posting any other photos or comments. At that point, I had to have him explain to me how all of the other posts were created since he admitted that he made up a fake name, Abdul Rasheed, when he created the account with Mr. Schmidt's name and photos on the profile page. After some reluctance to share the details, he eventually admitted that he gave the log in information to two other FHS students, and they were the ones who posted the other photos and comments to the site.

This matched the information that I had learned in my investigation, so I then asked H[REDACTED] if he knew the other boys were going to post such horrible things about our staff members, and he said he did not. Since H[REDACTED]'s dad was present, the police met with them about the larger ramifications of H[REDACTED]'s involvement in creating this site, explaining he was an accomplice even if he had no knowledge that the other boys were going to post threats or inappropriate comments and photos since he was the site's originator.

At that point, I completed my questioning with H [REDACTED], so I talked his father and explained that there would be a minimum of a five day suspension until I could conclude my final investigation and determine if additional consequences would be administered. Since the time of his initial suspension, new information has been uncovered that was not originally known that H [REDACTED] did not admit to or share with me. It is a possibility that H [REDACTED] may have had more involvement in posting additional photos or making comments on photos other than just the post he admitted to with the gas nozzle. The posts and comments that are in question are both sexually inappropriate and threatening towards staff members, thus during H [REDACTED]'s hearing we will be addressing this line of questioning further. If necessary, the police will have to be more involved and complete an IP address search of electronic items if we cannot determine exactly what H [REDACTED]'s involvement was as to the information I have now learned, since there is a discrepancy in his version of what he was responsible for versus what others were responsible for posting.

Due to H [REDACTED]'s gross misconduct, willfully impersonating a staff member on line, on line harassment of staff, sharing log in information leading to threats and inappropriate photos and comments towards staff, initially denying involvement and making an investigation more difficult, and possibly sexually harassing and threatening staff members, I am recommending H [REDACTED] K [REDACTED] be expelled from the Freeland Community School District.